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ABSTRACT

This document focuses on employer/employment services in vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs. Vocational rehabilitation is undergoing transformation in employment services to respond to redefined priorities, diverse populations, changing labor markets, state-of-the-art technologies, legislative mandates, and economic factors. Changes in employment trends have necessitated new approaches to placement of individuals with disabilities. The themes woven throughout the chapters of this document include: transformation from business as usual, focus on employment outcomes rather than process, emphasis on vocational customers--individuals with disabilities and employers, consumer satisfaction versus compliance, and challenges for long-term commitment from leaders. Chapters address: (1) the need for long-term commitment from leaders in the state/federal program; (2) the need for VR emphasis on employment outcomes in terms of the 1992 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act; (3) employer perceptions of VR based on employer surveys; (4) VR limitations in placement; (5) VR assets in placement; (6) a new paradigm for serving clients and employers; (7) what VR must do to provide appropriate services leading to employment of people with disabilities; and (8) methods for using this document. Appendices list employer concerns, list services provided to employers by VR agencies, and provide survey and recordkeeping forms. (Contains 26 references.) (JDD)

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The Name of the Game: Employment

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Twentieth Institute on Rehabilitation Issues

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Twentieth Institute on Rehabilitation Issues

The Name of the Game: Employment

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Chairperson's Comments

The Executive Committee for the Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) charged this Prime Study Group with the responsibility to develop a resource document on employment outcomes for use by rehabilitation agencies. The topic was selected in keeping with the mandates for employment in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992. These mandates clearly indicate that state agencies must redirect their efforts from a compliance and service driven delivery system to one that is driven by customer satisfaction.

Members of the Prime Study Group produced a document that can be used by state vocational rehabilitation agencies, private rehabilitation agencies, community-based rehabilitation programs, university training programs, and others. The study group outlined vocational rehabilitation's current limitations, as well as strengths, regarding employment. The document challenges agency administrators to accept the leadership role in meeting the mandates of the 1992 Amendments.

This document was developed through the expertise of the following members of the Prime Study Group: Peggy Anderson, Joseph Carr, Janet Dillingham, June Gutterman, Janice Holland, Virginia Anne Johnson, Hank Moczul, Frank Sell and Charles Young. A special thanks to Doug Rice, University Sponsor, for his leadership and direction throughout the duration of the study. Sincere appreciation to Ruth Gullett, Janice Irwin, Lou Tabor, Sandra Parkerson, and Pam Vaught, of the Arkansas Research and Training Center in Vocational Rehabilitation, for their overall support in preparing this document for printing and dissemination.

Serving as chairperson of such an outstanding study group has been a privilege and a pleasure.

Jack Van Hooser, Chair
IRI Prime Study Group

Chapter I

Introduction to the Study

Introduction to the Study

Objectives

1. To introduce the need and the purpose of the study

2. To define the themes and concepts used throughout the document

Summary

This IRI document will focus on specific factors related to employer/employment services in the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program. Emphasis will be placed on employment of individuals with disabilities as related to legislation, education, information, and changing attitudes.

The ultimate goal of VR from its inception some 75 years ago has always been placement of individuals with disabilities into gainful and suitable employment. Few other areas of VR have received more emphasis through training, literature, special projects and conferences. VR is undergoing transformation in employment services to respond to redefined priorities, diverse populations, changing labor markets, state-of-the-art technologies, legislative mandates and economic factors.

In recent years, there have been significant changes in employment trends. These changes necessitate new approaches to placement of individuals with disabilities such as marketing, the development of accounts, and Projects with Industry. Employment trends will continue to present challenges to VR professionals and employers as well as for persons with disabilities.

The 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 102-569) and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (P.L. 101-336) emphasize the need for the federal/state VR program to focus on employment outcomes in integrated settings.

Discussion

The Prime Study Group recommends, without reservation, that consumers and employers be regarded as customers. The study group used the following concepts.

Customer. The word "customer" conveys an image of consumers selecting or purchasing services or products which they have the privilege of choosing. VR's consumers and employers are, in fact, customers and should be the focus of the VR agency's mission and strategic planning. Other customers include referral sources, rehabilitation facilities, medical professionals, and other key stakeholders such as consumer advocacy groups, parents, families, and legislators.

Customer satisfaction. Satisfaction is evident when the customer spends money, returns as appropriate, recommends products and services, knows what he/she wants, and provides feedback.

VR agency and VR industry. "VR agency" refers to the state/federal program while "VR industry" refers to the larger universe of service providers.

Single brand identity. Single brand identity conveys the fact that the organization is known by one name and not confused with others. The term has exceptional features such as quality or quantity (e.g., Kleenex versus tissues). It implies that substitutions may result in reduced satisfaction.

The themes woven throughout the chapters of this document include:

- Transformation from business as usual
- Focus on employment outcomes rather than process
- Emphasis on VR customers--individuals with disabilities and employers
- Customer satisfaction versus compliance
- Challenges for long-term commitment from leaders

Chapters II through IX, consecutively, address the following:

- The need for long-term commitment from leaders in the state/federal program
- The need for VR emphasis on employment outcomes in terms of the 1992 Amendments and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Employer perceptions of VR, based on employer surveys
- VR limitations in placement
- VR assets in placement
- A new paradigm for serving clients and employers
- What VR must do to provide appropriate services leading to employment of people with disabilities, and
- Methods for using this IRI document

Implications

The philosophy of the VR system is that work is a prime contributor to an individual's identity and self-worth. However, the primary focus previously has been on the process of service delivery rather than on employment outcomes. It is clear now that VR must be proactive in bringing about change to meet the employment outcome mandates of the 1992 Amendments. This can best be accomplished if VR focuses on the needs of its customers.

Chapter II

The Leadership Challenge in Vocational Rehabilitation

The Leadership Challenge in Vocational Rehabilitation

Objectives

1. To emphasize that rehabilitation leaders must make a long-term commitment to increasing competitive employment and offering opportunities for career advancement, to a much larger number of individuals with disabilities

2. To promote the concept that VR must establish a new relationship among its customers, i.e., clients and employers

3. To emphasize that employment outcome, rather than employability, is the major goal of VR services

Summary

The leadership role involves moving the rehabilitation system from a process orientation to an outcome orientation. Success is dependent upon a long-term commitment to meaningful competitive employment for people with severe disabilities. This chapter reviews leadership responsibilities in a new paradigm that views clients and employers as customers of vocational rehabilitation.

Discussion

The shift from process to outcome orientation recognizes a need for a new way of doing business. The 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 102-569) mandate employment as the ultimate outcome of rehabilitation. The Amendments target outcomes by making direct changes in the process of rehabilitation, e.g., streamlining eligibility, establishing outcome indicators, and moving from employability to employment outcomes. These changes will require better understanding of the needs, expectations and requirements of customers. The Act clearly describes the individual with a disability as a customer who has choices rather than a passive recipient of services. Leaders must set directions which will enable VR professionals to achieve this objective.

Leaders who initiate change must understand that new directions require commitment over the long term. Change does not occur overnight, or even within months. It takes years of slow, steady shifts to achieve lasting change. Leaders must also recognize that there are no easy or clear solutions to problems which arise when any system moves from the known to the unknown. Deep commitment is critical to successful restructuring.

Ideally, leaders create opportunities for direct involvement in the process of change. Further, they build a working relationship among all of the key players. Actively engaging all partners in continuous improvement of the outcome is essential to the long-term viability of the rehabilitation industry.

Implications

Decision-making must be guided by an organization's mission, values, and goals. Each VR professional should become involved in fulfilling the organization's vision. Their personal contributions to the agency help move it toward desired outcomes for customers.

To be successful, any change process requires that leaders respond positively to the challenge. Staff must be empowered to help achieve the established goals--in this case, refocusing from process to outcomes. Ultimately, customers will see evidence of the promised employment outcomes.

Chapter III

Rehabilitation in the 1990s and Beyond

Rehabilitation in the 1990s and Beyond

Objectives

1. To discuss the need for VR to focus on employment outcomes in the 1990s

2. To review implications of the 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act and client choice/involvement for rehabilitation in the 1990s

3. To examine relationships between the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), and the proposed School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1993

4. To discuss trends in the U.S. marketplace and their implications for future employment of persons with disabilities

Summary

In deliberations over the 1992 Amendments, Congress noted that 43 million Americans have disabilities, of which 20 million are work-related disabilities. They stated that discrimination and prejudice continue to prevent opportunities for people with disabilities to achieve employment, independence, and integration; that more persons with disabilities can be employed through training, support services, and reasonable employer accommodations; and that the goals of ADA can be advanced through comprehensive rehabilitation and related services.

Considering these factors, Congress established the following purposes for the 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act:

- to provide comprehensive employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities;
- to maximize employability, independence, and integration;
- to direct the provision of rehabilitation services to recognition of career choice of persons with disabilities, and to establish systems of service and support for their career advancement; and
- to lead states and service providers to promote meaningful, gainful employment and independent living.

The intent of the 1992 Amendments and VR's major focus for the 1990s and beyond is employment, employment, employment!

Discussion

Focus on Employment Outcomes

Rehabilitation professionals can advance equity and full participation in society to Americans with disabilities in the 1990s and beyond by demonstrating that a major path for inclusion is employment. Recent passage of the ADA and the 1992 Amendments creates an opportunity to streamline the service delivery system to improve employment outcomes. Rehabilitation agencies have great flexibility to structure their staffing, practices, and services to maximize employment outcomes.

Proponents of the 1992 Amendments recognized that a meaningful job provides the resources, personal contacts, and self-worth that enable individuals to experience the best of America. The 1992 Amendments acknowledge the importance of consumer involvement and informed consumer choice by requiring a consumer-driven advisory board. Additionally, new provisions encourage individuals with disabilities to be active in, and take responsibility for, planning their employment outcomes from the outset.

Legislative Implications for Change

The Eighteenth IRI (Hope & Rice, 1991), Employer Service Strategies in Rehabilitation, summarized the ADA as requiring government and private business to make adjustments for employees with disabilities in the areas of employment, transportation, public services. public accommodations, and telecommunications. In concert with the ADA, the congressional committee deliberating on the School to Work Opportunities Act of 1993 sent a strong message that Congress values the precepts of the ADA in the context of school-to-work opportunities. The committee also conveyed the message that this legislation is consistent with and complements the spirit and intent of Part B of IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including Section 504.

The transition service requirements in IDEA and in the 1973 Rehabilitation Act provide appropriate frameworks to ensure that students with disabilities and their families successfully access, and fully participate in, all components of the Act. Further, the Job Training Partnership Act and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act include specific provisions to ensure the participation of youth with disabilities in the training and employment programs authorized.

It is expected that the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1993 will help to make the promise of ADA a reality for all students with disabilities. Students with varying disabilities would be an integral part of all aspects of the school-to-work systems--career exploration and counseling, planned programs of study, and job training--that lead to the award of a skill certificate. Systematic data collection and analysis would document the post-program outcomes of all students.

In sum, students with disabilities are entitled to the same high expectations, treatment, and leadership offered to their non-disabled peers, including:

- strategies ensuring appropriate paths to the workforce and post secondary education;

- high standards for students at all performance levels to realize their full potential;
- involvement and leadership from each key player (e.g., teachers, related-services personnel, rehabilitation personnel, employers, parents, and students);
- access to challenging core curricula as well as resources for additional training; and
- assessments that are valid, reliable, fair, and free of discrimination.

VR: An Avenue to Qualification

The ADA provides access to employment, however, an individual with a disability must be able to perform the essential functions of the job, with or without reasonable accommodation. VR programs are an avenue to qualification. Ideally, the VR agency and the VR industry will direct their resources to ensure that people with disabilities become qualified for employment. In doing this, the agency will

- devote staff time and expertise to understanding its business community,
- do business only with those vendors whose programs produce applicants who meet employer specifications, and
- use employer standards as criteria when evaluating and monitoring applicant qualifications.

Thus, together the ADA and the 1992 Amendments create more opportunities for full participation of individuals with disabilities through employment.

Other Employment Factors

Employment trends will continue to present challenges for VR professionals in career development for persons with disabilities. Current trends that will influence employment are:

- downsizing and "rightsizing"
- increasing flexibility of work hours, locations, and shared job opportunities
- refocusing on customer satisfaction
- changing employee benefit packages and options
- shifting from an industrial to a service/information economy
- shifting from a national to a global marketplace
- new Social Security Disability Income work incentives for people with disabilities
- National Health Insurance developments

Changes in demographics, technology, and transportation will also influence employment:

- an increasingly diversified workforce comprised of rising numbers of women, minorities, and people with disabilities
- advances in technology impacting job accommodations for all types of disabilities and increasing self-employment and home-based employment options
- transportation alternatives to enhance accessibility

These changes and their interactions may present significant challenges as well as opportunities for employment for persons with disabilities in the decades ahead.

Implications

The workforce of the 1990s and beyond will be more highly educated/trained, older, and more mobile than in previous generations. Rehabilitation agencies will be challenged to develop and adapt programs to address the customer needs by implementing training related to these technology, information, and service changes.

Supported employment opportunities will increase during the 1990s and beyond for individuals who need assistance in accessing a job, intensive training on the job, or follow-along services to obtain and maintain employment. Further, VR agencies will need to direct resources to the provision of extended services (e.g., supported employment, advocacy groups, community groups, and family members).

The future for people with disabilities is both promising and challenging. New and creative opportunities for employment are arising for people with disabilities, and technology is available to facilitate personal growth and job success. The challenge for rehabilitation agencies over the next two decades will be to make full use of these opportunities and technologies to advance independence, productivity, and community integration for individuals with disabilities.

Chapter IV

An Employer's Perspective

An Employer's Perspective

Objectives

1. To provide data from surveys on employer attitudes about the level of satisfaction with VR services

2. To enhance VR's effort to provide customer-based employment services for people with disabilities

Summary

Results of state and national surveys are used to support the need for networking and identifying employers who desire to take a more active role in the employment of persons with disabilities. Information from survey participants indicates that employers do not have adequate information on VR and placement related services. This information shows the need for VR to be more active in disseminating information to employers and across the larger VR industry even though some surveys indicate that employers may not see VR as an important resource in addressing labor market needs.

Discussion

A 1992 study conducted by Janni, Reenewitz, May and Dallas (for the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation employer focus groups) indicated the need for information on services available to employers, how candidates are referred for jobs, and criteria for reopening a case. Some employers admitted they simply don't know how to use VR. The focus group participants viewed themselves as VR customers and wanted to be treated accordingly. They expected professional and timely follow-up, an understanding of their business, and of the abilities required of an employee. They felt that VR needed to improve its communication with employers. They expected VR to make the initial contact and to meet with them to determine how VR can assess their needs.

Focus group participants suggested one- or two-day workshops on accommodation and work site modification as well as information on adaptive technology. They further requested periodic quality checks on client performance, and assistance in ADA implementation. Participants in these focus groups recognized that they themselves need to do more to develop a partnership with VR. Participants viewed the focus groups as excellent educational sources and encouraged more of this type of activity.

A 1988 Michigan Rehabilitation Services study of employers by Lewis (1988) found that the state VR agency was not well known and had not achieved "a single brand identity" (i.e., the agency was known by several different names rather than by one name or it was confused with a number of other human service agencies). VR's organizational recognition was typically low and VR was viewed as a social service agency in contrast to other employment agencies who were viewed as business partners.

Employers in the Michigan study had well-defined role expectations for all placement organizations. Interestingly, they expected a higher level of participation from agencies representing applicants with disabilities. Survey participants recognized that state agencies could be of valuable assistance in completing paperwork necessary to comply with certain laws and regulations. Participants were also aware of the state agency's usually positive interaction with other VR professionals. The state agency was seen as most valuable, however, in the area of rehabilitation engineering which was the employers' number one concern when hiring people with disabilities.

In 1991-92, 618 private-sector employers were surveyed at the request of Georgia's Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. While this group did think of Georgia VR whenever they specifically sought to hire an employee with a disability, only 18% indicated that they had been asked within the last two years to consider applicants with disabilities. Interestingly, five percent actively recruited employees with disabilities.

Maintaining Relationships

Across national and regional surveys employers report good relationships with VR (e.g., International Center for the Disabled, 1987). However, unless there is a shortage of job applicants employers typically do not contact VR because employment agencies, search firms, and individuals using networking are finding the jobs. More importantly, they will continue to receive priority when openings occur unless VR convinces employers that it can provide quality services.

Networking

National employment referral firms such as Schwab and Carrese, Human Resource Consultants, and Drake, Beam, and Morin in their placement manuals report that 75 to 80% of jobs today are found through networking. Interestingly, employers participating in the national surveys report that information from current employees and community associates were the primary sources of referral information on individuals with disabilities who later became employed by the company.

VR can benefit from networking with employment managers and interviewers as well. VR clients who have previously been employed already have a network of contacts the VR professional can use to expand the network. Various entities within the VR agency and the larger VR industry need to network with each other as well as with employers. When working with a local factory, branch, or office the VR professional should share information across the VR agency.

Implications

VR and other related agencies or organizations have produced a large number of publications related to placement and employment of individuals with disabilities. Unfortunately, most of these studies were conducted without the input of leaders from business and industry. If VR is to be successful, it is essential to obtain more employer input. Business must be more heavily represented in future studies in the areas of placement, employment, and employment outcomes.

Chapter V
Internal Analysis of Rehabilitation

Internal Analysis of Rehabilitation

Objectives

1. To identify restraints which limit the effectiveness of the VR counselor in the placement process

2. To discuss the issues affecting the rehabilitation counselor's attitude and performance in the placement process

Summary

The way things are done often need to be changed, or more attention devoted to factors that restrict desired outcomes. Before this can happen, however, restraints that prevent change from occurring must be identified followed by constructive steps to alleviate obstacles. This chapter attempts to present some of the restraints that exist and prevent placement from becoming the ultimate goal of rehabilitation services as mandated in recent relevant legislation.

Discussion

The rehabilitation counselor often asks the client this question, "Why did you come to Vocational Rehabilitation in the first place?" The reply of the client in most instances is, "To get a job." Numerous detours can be taken prior to finding a suitable job. Regardless of these detours, however, the ultimate outcome of services is to assist the individual with a disability to obtain and maintain gainful employment. The importance of work is illustrated in a quotation by Surrett (1988):

> Work is a basic institution, having a powerful role in the psychological, social, and economic aspects of our lives. Work contributes to self-esteem, identity, and a sense of order. A job tells a worker day in and day out that he has something to offer. (p. 5)

Advocates for the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 gave their support as the Amendments listed employment of individuals with severe disabilities as the number one priority. The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) is also considered to be a cornerstone for promoting jobs for people who previously would have received little consideration for placement. In reference to employment as an outcome, state VR agencies must answer many questions, such as:

1. Is getting a job the most important goal as far as administrators, managers, supervisors, and counselors are concerned?

2. Does the agency offer, or advocate, placement?

3. Are placement/employment activities given the priority they deserve?

4. Is the agency responsive to customers/clients who have placement as their major objective?

If these questions cannot be answered in the affirmative, the agency should review its response to its employer and client customers. If VR wants to stay in business, then it must do as all good businesses do--pay close attention to the needs of its customers. Restraints must be identified and dealt with efficiently by professionals in the rehabilitation industry.

Placement: A Low Priority for Personnel Evaluations

Most individuals have the tendency to give priority to those activities on which their performance evaluations are based. In terms of placement, a number of agencies do assess counselors on the number of successful placements, while others place little emphasis on this important activity. It is only natural that VR personnel concentrate on those job duties that are a part of their evaluation. Recent trends indicate that an increasing number of agencies are recognizing placement as a priority goal and are putting more emphasis on placement activities in performance evaluations.

Work Overload

When agencies who do little placement are questioned, they tend to respond on the premise that they do not have enough time, caseloads are too large or there is just too much paper work to do. There is much truth to this as agencies who have good placement programs agree that these barriers prevent them from doing everything that needs to be done. Counselors with large caseloads have little time to perform placement activities and devote most of their time to interviewing, compiling diagnostic information, arranging for evaluations, determining eligibility, attending staff meetings, etc., therefore, little time remains for placement. All these factors must be assessed and a determination made as to whether or not this is a focus on process rather than outcome.

Deficits in Placement Training

It appears that the very job title of counselor may be a detriment to placement of individuals with disabilities into gainful employment. Students in counselor education programs prepare to counsel. They are educated to help people resolve their personal, vocational, or life problems. The focus of their training is on relationship skills or medical aspects of disabilities with little emphasis on the labor market, dealing with employers, or placing people in employment. Many of the skills needed by placement specialists (recruitment, cost benefits, corporate culture, economics) are not included in the rehabilitation counseling curriculum.

Inservice training provided by Staff Development for state agency personnel in most cases is based on requests by administrators, supervisors, and counselors. It appears that some programs are redundant as they are provided over and over. On the other hand, requests for placement training seem to be few and far between, even though it is very pertinent to their job responsibilities.

Many areas in placement warrant continuous updating such new legislation, applicant resumes, job searches, reasonable accommodations, job interviews, job modifications, etc.

Updating of staff in these areas can and will be beneficial to consumers and employers--the customers of rehabilitation.

Tradition

The Twelfth Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (Minton & McConnell, 1986) If--The Future of Vocational Rehabilitation, states:

> Much discussion and debate have occurred over two possible directions which the public vocational rehabilitation program might take. On the other hand, there are those who would prefer to sustain the conventional program of time-limited services much as it is and leave the newer concepts of rehabilitation to others. As they circle their wagons against change, they fire volleys like, "We are already doing that," "You don't understand," "Where has that ever been tried," "You are against the program," and "We were doing that four years ago." Resting comfortably behind their circled wagons, they point to a long and successful history of the program.

Consensus of agreements is not difficult to obtain, especially if a program has been successful, tax dollars spent wisely, and lives of individuals enhanced. However, a highway system built some thirty years ago may be obsolete today as a result of major changes. This may also be true for VR and other programs which respond to the needs of people with disabilities. Any program or organization that becomes complacent and/or satisfied with past accomplishments should be concerned. It has been stated over and over that self-satisfaction, arrogance, and complacency do not provide an atmosphere that stimulates creativity, innovation, and growth.

The Comfort Zone

Most VR professionals feel comfortable in interacting with social workers, employment services representatives, and other similar individuals as they do not have to leave their comfort zone. Contacting employers, however, creates feelings of anxiety, especially if this is outside their normal operations.

It is true that everyone cannot do placement and that everyone does not have the personality or skills of a salesperson. To develop these skills, counselors and other professionals must leave their comfort zones realizing that placement is the goal of VR. If placement is not considered important, then the needs of VR's customers--employers and consumers--are not completely met.

Implications

Anytime restraints are discussed, there is a tendency to become negative. However, when customers are demanding employment, the VR must be sensitive to their needs. It is imperative that the restraints be identified so that goals can be refocused on outcomes rather than systems and processes.

Chapter VI

Vocational Rehabilitation Assets for Employers

Vocational Rehabilitation Assets for Employers

Objectives

1. To identify VR assets available to employers
2. To emphasize the need for ongoing acquisition of knowledge and skills for VR professionals
3. To develop resources for up-to-date information about changes in the labor market, global economy, and demographic trends

Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the VR services which make it valuable to business and industry. A brief description of these and recommendations for their development or enhancement are included. All VR agencies have the resources in place to some degree. However, to develop a comprehensive program of services that can be delivered to employer customers, it is important for human and financial resources to be identified and committed.

Discussion

Consultation

Federal and state regulations which impact business and industry are constantly being imposed. While larger organizations have extensive human resource and legal departments equipped to interpret and implement these new mandates, many small businesses lack these resources. This presents an opportunity for VR to offer beneficial services to business. VR can also assist employers with workers' compensation case management and in managing diversity. Swan's (1993) article in a recent issue of The Job Placement Digest indicates that ADA offers VR clients opportunities for greater access to quality employment. Also emphasized is the opportunity for placement professionals to demonstrate their value as active partners in the employment process. Hiring people with disabilities creates concern about supervision, acceptance by co-workers, and other factors that impact productivity. VR professionals can address concerns through consultation, technical assistance, and training.

Rehabilitation, Technology, and Accommodations

Businesses and industry may not be prepared to deal effectively with architectural barriers and job or worksite modification. They can be assisted by VR professionals who are prepared to assess specific needs of individuals with disabilities and make recommendations for customized modifications. Technological advances continue to produce an extensive range of assistive devices. Therefore, it is important for VR professionals to stay abreast of rapidly emerging technology so they can continue to be effective resources to employers.

Training

Ideally, it is important to provide specific training in job seeking and job maintenance skills for eligible VR clients as appropriate. Local resources for vocational and technical training may include community and technical schools or college and university systems. VR professionals also need to explore local options for on-the-job training programs which can assist employers with the cost of training new employees. Supported employment services are another resource for training, particularly for persons with severe disabilities.

Job Application, Recruitment, and Evaluation

Regulations related to the hiring process are a major concern for many employers. VR professionals can use the following interventions to allay these concerns:

1. Job Analysis: A thorough assessment of the specific tasks and essential job functions can identify the functional abilities and skills that are needed.

2. Vocational Evaluation: VR evaluations are individualized, reality based, and customized for specific needs. This important benefit for employers identifies potential for on-the-job success through vocational, medical, and psychological examinations.

3. Pre-screening: Ideally, the VR professional makes a match between the labor market needs and functional abilities and skills of clients. A screening and matching process can result in significant time and cost savings for the employer.

Employee Assistance Program

Large companies typically have employee assistance programs administered through the Human Resource Department or contracted through private providers of this service. Smaller employers lack resources to provide this service to their injured employees. When family members have a debilitating illness or injury, the intervention of a VR professional can result in retaining or maintaining a valuable employee, thus eliminating associated costs. This win-win situation benefits the employer, employee, the family, and the taxpayer, as well as VR.

Post Employment Training and Development for VR Professionals

The ability of VR professionals to deliver a full array of employer services requires ongoing post employment training and development. Resources for such training include agency in-service training, RCEPs, Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers, college and university courses, and seminars offered by private agencies or organizations.

Implications

It is important that VR professionals stay informed of changes in labor market needs and job forecasting. It is also essential that increased attention be given to the needs of employer services. Customer satisfaction should be the goal as VR professionals develop a

service package to fill local employer needs, develop personnel to efficiently deliver the services, and aggressively market this service package to the business community. Establishing these relationships will not only enhance VR's visibility but also establish their credibility as a viable resource for the business community.

An estimated 80% of all available job openings are never advertised but are filled through networking. These are often the better paying, more sought-after jobs. In contrast, advertised positions are often entry level, low paying, high turnover jobs. Unfortunately, these are the positions where rehabilitation clients are often placed. This may be a suitable experience for people who have no work history and need work experience, but a dis-service to those functioning at a higher level. Only through relationship building will VR professionals have access to this hidden job market.

The process of networking both internally and externally is crucial if VR is to thrive in today's competitive marketplace. Inter-office communication and the sharing of information and resources is essential. Lines of communication and referral must be established and maintained between VR and the business community. The VR professional must become more actively involved in the community, in professional organizations, and with employers to become effective in delivering services to customers.

Chapter VII

The Customers in Vocational Rehabilitation

The Customers in Vocational Rehabilitation

Objectives

1. To discuss aspects of the relationship between VR and the business community
2. To provide an overview of VR literature which recognizes the eligible person with a disability and the employer as dual customers
3. To overview a customer satisfaction, continuous improvement management model that enables VR to be a major player in employment of persons with disabilities

Summary

Improving the quantity and quality of placements of persons with disabilities has been a recurring state-federal VR theme. VR literature continuously recommends that VR operate as a customer-driven program based on customer satisfaction. Disability management is cited as one example of the potential collaborative relationship between VR and its employer-customer. The blueprint for implementing this partnership exists in a customer satisfaction, continuous improvement management system.

Discussion

The Ninth Institute on Rehabilitation Issues developed a document entitled Marketing: An Approach to Placement (Corthell & Boone, 1982). This document indicated that, historically, a counselor attempting to place a client with an employer resulted in a narrow focus that did not benefit more than one client at a time and resulted in limited VR agency exposure and impact. The document also indicated that, after seventy plus years of involvement with employers, the VR agency as well as the larger VR industry remained relatively unknown. It was concluded that the quantity and quality of placements could be increased by employing a marketing approach.

A market research study by the Michigan Rehabilitation Services (Lewis, 1988) concluded that the VR agency was not well-known in the employer community. Further, most employers expected a higher level of involvement of those placement sources representing persons with disabilities, and the study also noted that the VR agency had not achieved a single brand identity.

Corroborating findings from the Sixteenth Institute on Rehabilitation Issues study, Disability Management in the Workplace (Rice & Van Hooser, 1989), identified the potential partnership between VR and American business. This study focused, in part, on the demographic and economic changes influencing corporate America to consider implementing disability management as part of its human resource strategy.

VR's relevance in disability management is underscored by its historical experience in:

- case management as a service delivery vehicle;
- return-to-work rehabilitation of persons with disabilities;
- maintaining employment for current employees whose jobs are in jeopardy because of disability;
- accommodations consultation; and
- knowledge of a wide variety of community-based programs and resources related to return-to-work rehabilitation.

The IRI study on Disability Management (Rice & Van Hooser, 1989) concluded that the social goals of VR agencies, the business goals of employers, and the economic goals of persons with disabilities can all be achieved through creative partnerships stimulated by VR agencies addressing their employer-customers' disability management needs.

In a similar vein, the Multistate Marketing Conference (Gottlieb & Vandergoot, 1989) recommended more focus by the VR industry on the business community with a goal of long-term employer relationships and more and better job opportunities. Marketing was defined as: "an on-going continuous approach which enables VR agencies to identify employer needs, refocus resources and management structure and improve services to clients and employers which satisfy their needs." That conference recommended elevation of consumers and employers to the status of customer.

As previously stated, a customer has choices and actively selects or purchases services or products. Based on the literature, good customers (a) know what they want, (b) expend resources, (c) return if appropriate to get quality services, (d) recommend product/service to others, and (e) provide feedback.

The Multistate Conference identified that customer satisfaction depends on continuous improvement in service quality. Producing a trained, qualified workforce that can produce, and therefore enhance profitability, will place the VR agency in partnership with the employer-customer.

Model for Customer Satisfaction

A blueprint for implementing customer satisfaction, continuous improvement, and quality management to enhance employment for persons with disabilities was the subject of a 1992 RSA National Short-term Training Program targeted to VR agency executives. This model presented by M. C. Lewis, Ph.D., of Wayne State University, borrowed heavily from current customer satisfaction, management technology employed by American business to enhance their competitiveness. The long-term potential of this blueprint is assured because VR agencies would be engaging in some identical strategies and tactics used by their customers--using philosophy, and terminology familiar and comfortable to employers.

Principles of Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction determines perceptions of service quality. Service quality yields the following benefits:

- competitive advantage
- increased single-brand identity
- customer loyalty
- reduced cost of doing business
- positive attitude toward VR agencies

Characteristics of a Customer-Driven Organization

A customer-driven organization understands the customer by demonstrating that it has people throughout the organization having meaningful firsthand contact with customers, knows which services or service attributes are important to customers, and understands what drives customer choice. Such an organization understands that customer groups differ and, therefore, adjusts strategies accordingly. It also recognizes that customers are interested in solutions to their problems and looks to unmet needs, realizing that current service offerings may not provide the best response to customer needs.

A customer-driven organization is also based on solid market research, understands key associations, driving perceptions, and knows why the organization is perceived as it is. It also is clearly positioned with a strong identity and network of associations.

In a customer-driven organization, quality/value measures drive objectives since the organization truly cares about what the customer is receiving. It regularly measures customer satisfaction using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Customer satisfaction is a function of a customer's perception of service performance in relation to that customer's expectations regarding the service offering. Customer satisfaction management, therefore, begins with actively managing customer's expectations which are translated into a performance plan.

The following sequence of functions constitutes a customer satisfaction management process:

- the development of a comprehensive set of Internal Performance Measures (IPMs)
- periodic random sample satisfaction surveys of customers
- analysis of cause and effect relationships between IPMs and customer satisfaction
- adjustment of resource allocations and performance levels
- continuous monitoring performance with IPMs
- periodic revalidating of linkages to customer satisfaction

Figure 7.1 illustrates the relationship between IPMs, performance plans, and customer satisfaction.

Figure 7.1

Continuous Improvement Model

Maintaining customer satisfaction is an ongoing process that can be achieved using the continuous improvement model depicted in Figure 7.2.

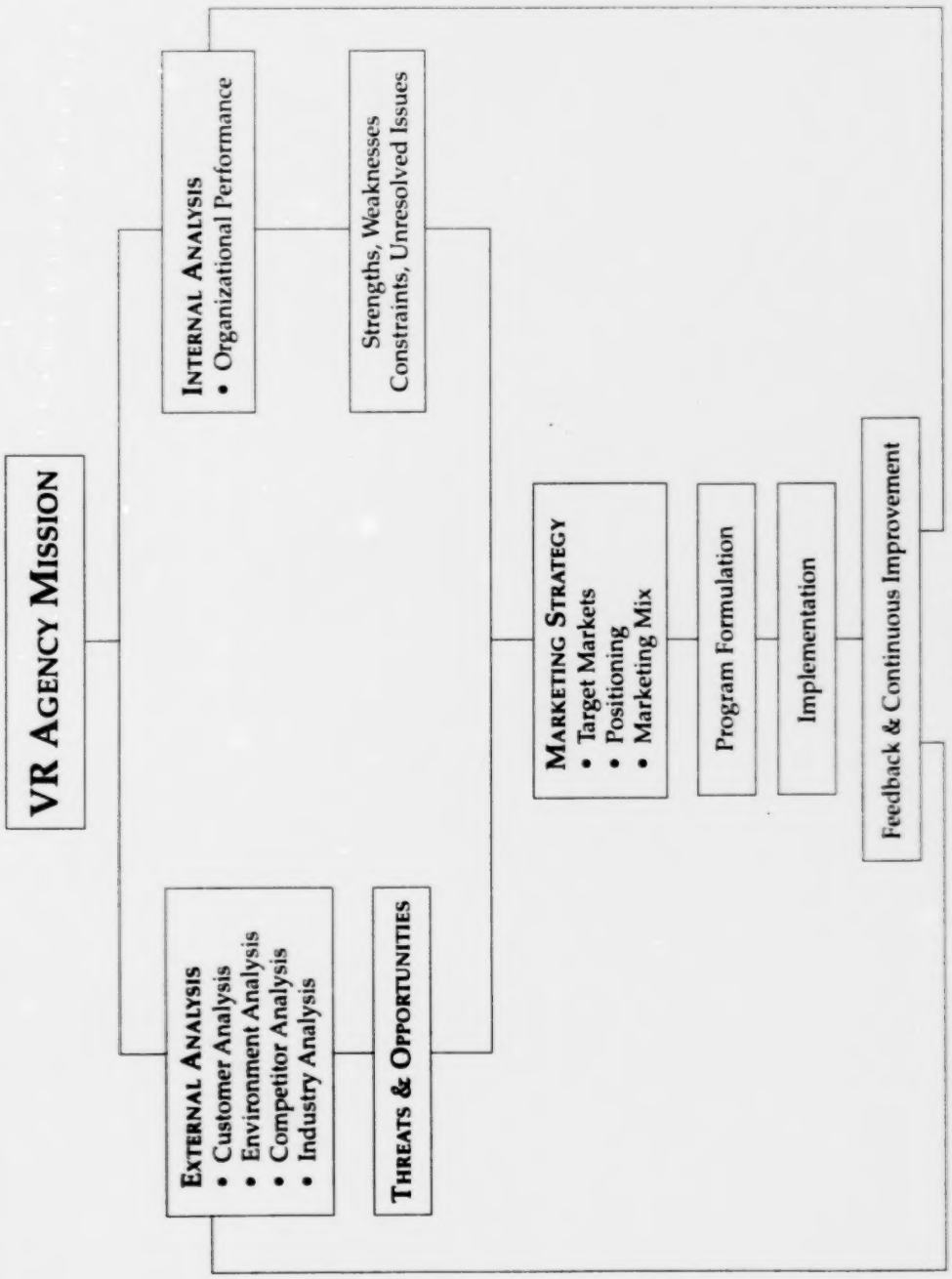

Figure 7.2

Implications

Improving the quality of job placements for persons with disabilities is a long-term strategic initiative. To be effective requires full acknowledgment of the employer as customer. A customer satisfaction continuous improvement management model currently exists and is adaptable to the VR agency.

Chapter VIII

Qualities of a Major Player

Qualities of a Major Player

Objectives

1. To review the challenges presented to vocational rehabilitation if it is to be a major player in employment of people with disabilities
2. To answer the question, "What will it take for VR to be a major player in the employment of people with disabilities?"
3. To discuss action steps that will help VR progress toward being a major player

Summary

This chapter asks VR to examine its current practices and to determine if the organization is functioning as one of the major players in the employment of people with disabilities. A wealth of technical knowledge to help VR become a major player has already been provided through previous Institute on Rehabilitation Issues publications: marketing and placement, disability management in the workplace, the future workplace, and employer services. In this document, the technical knowledge gained from previous IRI studies and other employment-related publications is applied, asking rehabilitation organizations, "If your agency were truly applying the strategies suggested, what would the agency be doing?" With the wealth of publications mentioned in earlier chapters, it's obvious that VR is certainly on track with previous research, ideas, and philosophies about the employment of people with disabilities. VR has discussed and written about these ideas for many years. Now the challenge to VR organizations to implement, to follow through, to take the actions necessary, and to do so with consistency. Previous chapters have addressed the issue of the client-customer. This chapter is focused on the employer-customer and the suggested action steps for VR agencies which choose to acknowledge and treat the employer as a customer.

Discussion

The Challenge

In the transition from ideas and philosophies to implementation through action, the challenge now is to treat employers as customers. WE CANNOT CONDUCT BUSINESS AS USUAL. As a result the nonprofit organization must determine its basic function or mission and decide who are its customers and what products will it provide. Companies prosper when they meet consumer needs and fail when they do not.

If VR agencies elevate the employer to the true classification of customer and focus on customer satisfaction as a driving force, the agency faces the following challenges in becoming a major player in employment of people with disabilities.

1. It must know its true niche in the employer marketplace.
2. It must be more than compliance driven.
3. It must improve its image with the employer-customer.

4. It must realize that continuous improvement includes the products and services it offers to business and industry.
5. It must accept the premise that if the needs of the employer-customers are met, then clients' needs will be met...as will the VR agency's needs.

With regard to number five above, there is an excellent case-in-point. The Alabama Division of Rehabilitation Services was approached by a major bank to provide statewide, in-depth training on disability awareness and on the Americans with Disabilities Act to the bank staff. This bank was not an active account of the agency, nor was it hiring people with disabilities in any significant number. The agency chose to respond to the bank's need by developing detailed training materials and devoting a significant amount of staff time to providing the requested training. While providing that training, the agency was advised of the bank's interest in donating teller machines to the agency so that bank trainers could work with VR staff in the development of a pre-employment training program for tellers. Concluding that this rehabilitation agency was a credible resource based on their quality training, the bank wanted to strengthen this partnership by meeting one of it's additional needs in the recruitment of trained bank tellers for their entry level jobs (with full benefits). By first meeting the needs of this employer, the VR agency's needs and those of its clients were also met!

Techniques and strategies developing this type of capacity have been highlighted in the previous chapter. In addition, a comprehensive training program has been designed (Lewis, 1992) and provided by the Region V Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program in a workshop entitled, "Marketing: A blueprint for implementing customer satisfaction, continuous improvement and quality management to enhance employment for persons with disabilities."

This chapter will address these challenges by asking, "If VR agencies applied the marketing strategies suggested, then what are the action steps necessary to become a major player in the employment of people with disabilities?" VR agencies face the challenge of implementation!

Alternatives

By asking the right questions and following through with actions to obtain the answers to these questions, VR should be able to modify its approach to accommodating the employer-customer. By doing so, agencies can achieve the status of major players in the employment of people with disabilities. There are six suggested action steps for implementation:

1. Move from a selling approach to a marketing approach.
2. Know existing employer-customers and potential employer-customers.
3. Shift VR agency focus from process issues to employment outcomes.
4. Make agency systems more flexible.
5. Re-examine staff roles and better utilize resources.
6. Broaden measurements of accountability.

A more detailed study of these action steps will help agencies with implementation.

Move From Selling to Marketing

Figure 8.1 depicts the distinctions between selling and marketing. As agencies shift focus from "selling" job-ready clients to marketing a variety of services to the employer-customers, definite conclusions can be drawn:

1. VR placement specialists/counselors are <u>not</u> sales people, but rather marketing specialists.
2. VR needs "repeat business" from its employer-customers.
3. VR needs to understand its employer-customer needs and determine their satisfaction with the services provided.

SELLING VS. MARKETING

SELLING CONCEPT

"If we just had more salespeople... we could double our sales volume."

Assumptions

1. The main task is sales generation.
2. Buyers won't buy on their own.
3. Buyers must be induced to buy through various sales-stimulating devices.
4. Buyers will probably buy again...but if they don't, there are other potential buyers who will.

The Selling Way

- Uses pressure tactics.
- Goal is to get the sale...not customer satisfaction.
- Long-run success requires:
  a. No need for repeat business.
  b. Vast, untapped market.
  c. Customers with short memories—forget dissatisfaction.
  d. Closed-mouth customers—don't talk about dissatisfaction with other customers and potential customers.
  e. Customers who don't complain to watchdog agencies, legislators, consumer advocate groups, etc.

MARKETING CONCEPT

"Customer satisfaction is the key to market leadership and sustained, long-term growth because customers vote with their dollars."

Assumptions

1. Customers have a set of needs.
2. Customer needs change over time.
3. We have certain specific skills or competencies as a firm.
4. By focusing on customer satisfaction, we can best match our skills to customer needs and gain a competitive advantage.
5. A customer orientation will best position us for sustained, long-term growth.

The Marketing Way

- Understand customer thinking and practices regarding purchases of your offering and competitive offerings.
- Monitor customer thinking and practices to discover significant shifts, changes.
- Adjust the organization's offerings and business practices to accommodate customer needs and wants.
- Do all of this better than the competition.

Figure 8.1

Know Existing Employer-Customers and Potential Employer-Customers

There are a number of focused questions that will help a VR agency to become better acquainted with its employer-customers. If the answers to the following questions are tracked and analyzed, the agency could be on its way to becoming a major player in employment of people with disabilities.

What does the current employer-customer pool look like?

1. What are types of employers with whom the agency works, sorting those customers by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code?
2. What are the size patterns of the companies with whom the agency works?
3. What are the geographic clusters of the companies?
4. Which of those companies have hired agency clients?
5. What are the job/disability/salary patterns for clients hired by those companies?
6. What other services have the agency's employer-customers used?
7. What are the entry level or high turnover jobs within the companies with which the agency works?
8. What are the employee benefits available for workers in those companies?
9. What types of job accommodations are being implemented and with which types of employers?
10. What are the trends in the marketplace...where are those companies going?

In Appendix A, there is a sample "Employer Record" form used by Alabama's Division of Rehabilitation Services to track the answers to the above questions. This form does not yet track types of accommodations provided in the workplace, but plans are in place to gather that data. Other significant employer-customer information should include business profiles and annual reports which could be maintained in customer files. Such data would help to identify what the company does, how it does it, and where it's going. By studying the clustered answers to the questions noted above via computer-generated or summary reports, an agency would be able to better determine where it will be, or could be, most successful with future employer and client-customers in the employment area.

What are the current concerns or questions from active employer accounts about agency products/services and are agency staff able to respond to those inquiries properly?

It is critical that VR agencies prepare staff to properly respond to the most likely employer concerns and questions. From a training manual entitled, "Training for Job Developers: A Supervisor's guide" published by Milt Wright and Associates, Appendix B demonstrates some of the typical employer statements or concerns and the better responses that can be provided by rehabilitation staff. Additional information in Appendix C further expands typical employer concerns. It is vital

that agencies train staff in this area and allow them to role play the most appropriate responses. In doing so, VR agencies' rehabilitation will be a more credible entity to employers.

Does your organization routinely identify employer-customer needs and determine which of those needs rehabilitation can or cannot meet?

Several VR agencies have begun to formally survey active employer accounts through periodic mail surveys. Appendix D has a sample of one such survey which queries employers not only about their needs, but also about their level of satisfaction with services provided. Such a survey moves VR much closer to the employer-customer. For example, on a standard survey form, an employer's check beside "would like more information" in the "needs" column would trigger a follow-up visit by a VR representative (See Appendix D).

Dialogue with VR agencies who have been involved in providing disability-related services subsequent to the enactment of the ADA reveals a more informal method of learning about employer needs. Since ADA has become law, more potential employer-customers are contacting VR with a variety of questions which are, inadvertently, allowing the agency to become more aware of employer needs. Some of the more common inquiries have included:

1. I need assistance with an alternative method of testing this job applicant. Can you assist me? He's disabled.

2. Can a representative from your agency come in and teach our company how to better interview people with disabilities?

3. We need assistance in setting up a system for discussing and tracking reasonable accommodations provided to our job applicants and employees. Do you have one?

4. Our company needs assistance in promoting a worker who is disabled that you placed here last year. We need your advice.

5. The accommodation we tried on the worker you referred six months ago is not working. What do we do now?

All of these questions have been asked of many VR staff. If VR were to track these types of questions statewide, regionally, and nationally, there could be a better understanding about the needs of employer-customers with resulting collaboration on appropriate responses.

Does the agency understand employer expectations of VR?

In order to better manage expectations, Lewis (1992) suggested several action steps for what she labeled "message control." The message about agency employer services and products should be written, not just word of mouth. Put it in writing in brochures, videos, and other organizational material so that control is maintained over the message. A clear and consistent message results in clear and manageable employer-customer expectations. Lewis also suggested calling on the customer for input, rather than waiting for complaints. This will allow an organization to be more proactive rather than reactive. One final suggestion is to better utilize employer advisory boards to state the organization's message and clarify expectations.

Is the agency measuring employer-customer's level of satisfaction with products and services provided by the agency?

A number of VR agencies throughout the nation have begun to conduct formal employer satisfaction surveys. Some are conducted annually with all employer accounts and others are conducted immediately following the actual points of contact with the employer. Appendix D contains samples of surveys which are computer generated and summarized in reports which can be used to improve products and services.

Shift Agency Focus From "Process Issues" to Employment Outcomes

In the reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act, all rehabilitation agencies were reminded that the primary focus in state VR programs is to be on employment of people with disabilities. Oftentimes this language has been interpreted to mean an increased number of Status 26s.

There must be a shift in focus from emphasizing rehabilitation process issues to actually tracking and rewarding counselors' employment-related initiatives which lead to employment outcomes. This may challenge agencies to change the focus from status changes to client-centered priorities such as:

Job Readiness Assessment	Interviewing Assistance
Career Exploration	Job Retention Counseling
Job Skills Development	Job Seeking Assistance
Resume Preparation	Job Pre-Screening
Completion of Job Applications	Job Readiness Classes

There must also be a shift in focus to recognize the provision of services to employer-customers as a viable staff activity. Appendix E lists types of services that could be provided and tracked as part of an accountability measurement. Shifting this focus permits organizations to more closely identify employer needs and better measure their satisfaction.

Make Agency Systems More Flexible

Some pertinent questions that a VR agency might ask to assess its flexibility in responding to the employer-customer are:

1. If a person with a disability has applied for a job but is not a VR client, and the employer contacts the state agency for pre-employment consultation and possible job-site accommodation, is the agency willing or able to rapidly respond to these needs?

2. What does an agency do with job leads from employer-customers that it cannot fill?

3. If an employer has hired clients from a VR agency and calls that agency for assistance with other workers who become disabled, does that agency have a system allowing it to promptly serve that employer and worker?

4. Do representatives from the employment community actively advise VR in the planning and structuring of rehabilitation processes, forms, marketing materials, self-evaluations, training, and other employment matters?

5. Does the agency have a system which is flexible enough to comprehensively search for all qualified applicants in response to a job lead from an employer-customer?

These and other questions will help state rehabilitation agencies determine how flexible they can be in addressing employers' disability-related needs.

Re-examine Staff Roles and Better Utilize Resources in Light of Employer-Customers' Needs

When funding resources are limited or no fiscal growth is expected, it is critical that VR agencies better utilize, and possibly redirect, existing resources.

Staffing patterns. One of the first questions to be asked is, "Is the agency getting the most and best from its staff as it relates to meeting its customer's needs?" In the last ten years, in light of changing customer needs, many rehabilitation agencies have redirected resources into new staffing patterns, primarily in the areas of job coaches, placement/marketing specialists, and technology specialists.

Training. Upgrading existing staff expertise to better meet employer needs should be implemented in these areas: identifying essential job functions, improving job analysis skills, teaching interviewing do's and don'ts, improving ADA architectural accessibility knowledge, enhancing expertise in accommodations for specific disability groups.

Development of materials. With the advent of ADA, a wealth of new resource materials have been, and continue to be, developed to meet the needs of both employer/customers and client/customers. Examples of these resources include ADA training materials and workbooks, accessibility or compliance checklists, reasonable accommodation worksheets, and interviewing fact sheets. Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act now permit use of 110 funding for ADA training to employers.

Information sharing. On a local, state, regional, and national level, VR agencies need to develop a system of sharing employment related information: job ready applicant pools, names of employer accounts that can be used for testimonies in other areas, resource materials as described previously, technology and other job accommodation solutions. Leadership at the state, regional, and national level to include VR directors, the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Rehabilitation Services Administration is a critical component.

Assess quality of resources used to assist clients. VR agencies should better assess the quality of the services that are purchased on behalf of clients, particularly those services which impact client-customers' job readiness and competitiveness in the labor market. Such assessments might include a focus on vocational evaluations, specific skills or vocational training, or the quality of purchased accommodations.

Staff input. VR field counselors and marketing specialists offer the following suggestions regarding the re-examination of staff roles and utilization of resources:

1. Provide more job coaching resources and better coordinate those resources.

2. Enhance staff expertise in job site accommodations and technology, and do so before the employer-customer is approached.

3. Allow placement or marketing staff to "specialize" in working with "like-employers" (e.g., service-industry contacts, manufacturing contacts, government contacts, banking-industry contacts).

4. Develop and implement client-customer self-advocacy training on job accommodation needs and solutions.

5. Provide "job club" resource groups regularly to client-customers.

6. Better utilize a team approach to placement activities.

7. Establish comprehensive applicant pools of job-ready clients.

8. Develop and maintain a technology and accommodation data base for staff and clients.

9. Purchase job-site accommodation technology more rapidly and provide follow-through after accommodations are implemented.

10. Improve the quality of vocational evaluations.

11. Provide clients with better training programs that meet the needs of potential employer-customers.

12. Better identify and utilize a variety of employer-customer services.

13. Improve marketing materials used with employer-customers, demonstrating successfully employed clients.

14. Design systematic employer development plans.

15. Strengthen the ties with local employment service offices to ensure more direct and comprehensive access to job leads and more referrals of people with disabilities to those job leads.

Broaden Measurements of Accountability

As VR broadens its focus from compliance-driven issues, it needs to measure other activities. In order to be more employer-customer driven agencies should begin to assess other factors that directly influence employment outcomes. In his books, In Search of Excellence (1989), and A Passion for Excellence (1985), Tom Peters stresses the importance of the qualitative aspects of business. He also admits that he retains vestiges of his engineering training and admits to being a closet quantifier. As such, he states, "I think the soundest management advise is the old saying, 'What gets measured gets done'." In addition, Molinaro (1984) uses the phrase "People respect what you inspect."

In the latter part of the previous chapter suggestions on customer satisfaction management systems were presented. Figure 7.2 is a good example of the clustering and tracking of such data.

In viewing the employer as a customer, agencies might ask themselves the following questions:

1. If employer account systems are utilized, are the outcomes being tracked?

2. Is there an accountability measurement for the team approach to placement, not just accountability for individual efforts (e.g., my client was placed in my job lead).

3. Is the organization tracking, and quantifying, the types and numbers of employment related services to clients (interviewing assistance, job readiness training, completion of job applications, etc.)?

4. Is the organization using the above data to track patterns of success, levels of satisfaction and identification of needs?

In previous sections of this chapter, Appendices D and E have offered possible instruments to track some of this data. The two most important issues in such tracking are (a) identification of customer needs, and (b) measurement of customer satisfaction in services/products delivered. VR will never know if it is moving forward as a key player in the employment of people with disabilities until it tracks, in detail, its employer-customer's level of satisfaction.

Implications

Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 have re-emphasized the focus of public rehabilitation programs on the employment of people with disabilities. State agencies must go beyond discussing or writing about the employer as an important customer. VR should work toward the actions suggested here and demonstrate that the employer is a customer.

In order to take the lead in this arena, it is imperative for VR to:

1. Identify the needs and expectations of the employer-customer.

2. Identify rehabilitation's niche in that marketplace, being clear about the products and services to be provided.

3. Develop staff expertise and provide appropriate materials and staff to meet those needs.

4. Prepare the client-customer to be a qualified job applicant.

5. Modify existing agency systems and shift resources to better address employer needs and enhance employer satisfaction.

6. Become highly competitive in responding rapidly to the employer-customer needs at a high level of quality

If these actions are taken there remains little doubt that VR will, in fact, be the major player in the employment of people with disabilities because employers and people with disabilities will place rehabilitation organizations in that role.

Chapter IX

Use of the Document

Use of the Document

Objectives

1. To document the need for directing resources to strategic labor market management
2. To present a rationale and format for use of the document in promoting strategies for innovative employer services
3. To identify the roles of staff development personnel (e.g., agency staff, regional continuing education program staff, and research and training centers) in implementing training.

Summary

It is well established in this document that technological developments, legislation (e.g., The American's with Disabilities Act, The Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act) and a rapidly changing labor market increase the need for marketing rehabilitation services to employers. When employer services were first introduced to rehabilitation, the long established client-centered model was challenged and VR was called upon to market its services to employers as well as to persons with disabilities, and the community at large (Hope & Rice, 1991; Greenwood & Johnson, 1985). Replacing the client-centered model with strategic labor market management, as outlined in this document, is designed to create customer satisfaction (i.e., clients and employers) within a continuous improvement system.

The need for strategic labor market management is essential. Today, workers with disabilities and the VR agencies who represent them face increased competition from workers who are not disabled in high school co-op programs, technical schools, universities, placement agencies, employment agencies, and other public agencies like JTPA and state employment security commissions. Employers can choose between many placement or brokering organizations as well as many applicants attempting to locate and maintain employment. Services that lower search, screening, and transaction costs are rated as important by employers as are a placement organization's ability to reduce the risk of making a bad hiring decision (Louis Harris & Associates, 1987; Greenwood & Johnson, 1987; Johnson, 1991). Therefore, to compete effectively it is important for VR professionals to know how to create satisfaction among employers and clients within a system designed to continuously improve itself.

Discussion

Rationale

This document was designed to be used in increasing the quality and quantity of employer services. To achieve this purpose, the document identifies assets and barriers within VR that can promote or limit such services. For example, the lack of staff training in placement was identified as critical.

If rehabilitation agencies are to successfully provide employer services, it is important that all levels of agency personnel be fully informed, e.g., agency administrators, upper and middle management, field and facility supervisors, rehabilitation counselors, support staff, and clerical staff. The needs of employers can only be met through the assistance of a trained and knowledgeable staff in an agency that is committed to serving the employment community. The focus should be on characteristics and needs of the local employment community, resources, and staff responsibilities as well as on attitudes, concepts, and agency policies.

Format

The following content modules derived from chapters in the document are suggested as a format for staff training:

1. Introduction and training objectives
2. The leadership imperative
3. Rehabilitation in the 1990s and beyond
4. An employer's perspective
5. Internal analysis
6. Inventory of rehabilitation resources
7. The customers in vocational rehabilitation
8. What it takes to be a major player
9. Local problems, solutions, and success stories

As in other types of staff training, a variety of methods is most effective. The following methods are suggested for staff training in employer services.

- presentation of information by staff development personnel (agency staff, RCEP trainer, R&T staff) or local business and industry representatives
- utilization of small group discussion for exploring issues, problems, solutions, and success stories
- on-site tours and employer/personnel manager panels to identify employer services needed locally
- use of visual aids (e.g., videotapes, transparencies, sample promotional materials)

The following sample agenda can guide staff development personnel with the understanding that the needs of agencies will differ.

	[Day 1]
30 minutes	Introduction of trainer(s) and each group member
1 hour	Orientation: Purpose, objectives, pre-program evaluation
1 hour	Employer/personnel manager panel
2 hours	Content modules from the document
1 hour	Group discussion of local problems, solutions and success stories
	[Day 2]
1 hour	Local administrative issues
1 hour	Local needs and resources
2 hours	Content modules from the document (see above)
2 hours	Group exercises
30 minutes	Evaluation and close

Implications

The ultimate objective of employer services is integration of the worker with a disability into the American workforce. Over the years, rehabilitation professionals who have developed long-term relationships with employers report that ongoing dialogue between the employer and disabled workers facilitated useful adaptations that sustained or improved the fit between the employer and the workers, (Louis Harris, 1987; Greenwood & Johnson 1985; Greenwood & Johnson 1987; Johnson, 1991). However, until recently, resources were limited for guiding the provision of employer services. Rehabilitation professionals had few practical guidelines on an effective management system to guide employer services despite the fact that they continue to be measured on the number of placements they obtained. This chapter provides a framework for agencies to follow in utilizing the document to establish better working relationships within the local employment community.

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Appendices

DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES
COMPANY RECORD

EDC # | CO. # | ___ NOT AN ACCOUNT

COMPANY NAME | DATE ACCT. ESTABLISHED | CO. CONTACT PERSON MR/MRS FIRST MI LAST SUFFIX

PHONE | POSITION/TITLE | MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. BOX CITY STATE ZIP

STREET ADDRESS (IF DIFFERENT) | COUNTY | SIC | SIZE | UNION Y/N | FED. CONTRACTOR Y/N

ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVE | CLEARANCE Y/N | FEDERAL I.D. #

TARGETED JOBS: 1. JOB TITLE/DOT 2. JOB TITLE/DOT

3. JOB TITLE/DOT 4. JOB TITLE/DOT 5. JOB TITLE/DOT

OTHER COMPANY INFORMATION

INSURANCE PROVIDED
- ___ HEALTH
- ___ DENTAL
- ___ LIFE
- ___ OTHER

PRE-EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS
- ___ DRUG SCREENING
- ___ MEDICAL EXAM
- ___ POLYGRAPH
- ___ WRITTEN EXAM
- ___ SECURITY CLEARANCE

WORK SCHEDULE
- ___ FULL TIME ___ PART TIME
- ___ SEASONAL: _____
- ___ DAYS: _____
- ___ EVENINGS: _____
- ___ NIGHTS: _____
- ___ ___M___T___W___TH___FR___SAT___SUN___

LEAVE
___ ANNUAL ___ SICK HOLIDAYS:

APPLICATION PROCESS

OTHER INFORMATION
___ EXCLUSIVE ASES AGREEMENT ___ ACCESSIBLE LOCATION ___ ON BUS LINE ___ OTHER:

COMPANY INTERESTS
- ___ RECRUITMENT/HIRING
- ___ TAX CREDITS
- ___ OJT
- ___ PROJECTS WITH INDUSTRY
- ___ CONTRACT LABOR
- ___ OJE
- ___ JOB COACHING
- ___ AWARENESS TRAINING
- ___ ADA ISSUES _____

Appendix B
Employer Concern Matrix

TYPICAL RESPONSES	KEEP IN MIND	POSSIBLE ACTIONS
"We're not hiring now."	That's great, you have lead time!	Request opportunity to be prepared for when they are hiring.
"Send literature."	That's fine, I can call again after they have had time to read the literature.	Reinforce the necessity and value of meeting in person. Send literature. Attach a note/letter specifying a date and time when you will call back.
"Have your applicants come down and fill out applications."	This requires no investment on their part in my applicants. Will probably waste time.	Express that you are concerned with not wasting anyone's time. You need more information about their needs before you can effectively select the appropriate applicants for them.
"We don't work with agencies."	Possible misconceptions of program. Typical screening device. Be persistent.	Explain that you offer all of the services of an agency but that you charge no fees. Send literature. Get the name of the person who does the hiring. Call again.
"We just had a lay-off."	They do not need your services at the present time, but they probably will when business picks up.	Empathize with a comment about "hard economic times." Inquire as to when they expect business to pick up. Get the name of the person who does hiring. Put details on your calendar and follow-up later.
"We're working with another program."	Respect the company's loyalty. Could be screening device.	Reinforce that you work in cooperation with other programs. Encourage them to increase their options.
Person is not available.	That's okay.	Inquire as to the best time to call back. Leave name and telephone number; say you will call back.

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Appendix C
Common Employer Concerns or Objections

1. Rehabilitation is just another bureaucratic myriad of regulations and requirements.
2. I'll be encumbered by reporting requirements and compliance demands if I decide to do business with you.
3. You're all part of government social programs...uncoordinated and somewhat inefficient.
4. Job performance is poorer for the handicapped.
5. There's less job stability for disabled workers.
6. Insurance rates will skyrocket if I hire your person.
7. "They" can't do the job.
8. I'll have to make too many changes to accommodate your applicant.
9. Co-workers won't get along with "them." Hiring will create problems.
10. I'd be happy to help you out but the first line supervisor might not be able to handle this situation.
11. Your person will be out sick too frequently.
12. We've had some bad experiences with hiring the handicapped in the past.

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Appendix D
Division of Rehabilitation Services
Survey of Business and Industry

COMPANY _____ _____ _____

I.D.# _____ **CITY** _____ **STATE** _____

1. I am aware of the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the assistance it offers to business and industry.

   ❑ Aware ❑ Somewhat Aware ❑ Not Aware

IF YOU ANSWERED "NOT AWARE," PROCEED TO QUESTION 7.

Please circle the number indicating your opinion of the appropriateness [from appropriate (5) to inappropriate (1)] for questions 2 through 6:

2. The last job applicant referred to me by Rehabilitation was:

   Appropriate Inappropriate
   5 4 3 2 1

   ❑ Have not had job applicants referred to me by Rehabilitation.
   Comment: _____

3. Overall, the job applicants referred to me by Rehabilitation have been:

   Appropriate Inappropriate
   5 4 3 2 1

   Comment: _____

4. The last person I hired who was referred to me by Rehabilitation was:

   Appropriate Inappropriate
   5 4 3 2 1

   ❑ Have not hired persons referred to me by Rehabilitation.
   Comment: _____

5. Overall, the persons I have hired from Rehabilitation were:

   Appropriate Inappropriate
   5 4 3 2 1

   Comment: _____

6. The rehabilitation services provided to my company have been:

Appropriate 5 4 3 2 Inappropriate 1

Comment: _____

7. Please note your use of, or interest in, the following services, information, or assistance:

	Used Service?		Would like more information
	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	
Recruitment of Job Applicants			
Post-hire Assistance			
Tax Credit Certification			
On-the-job Evaluation			
Job Coaching			
Contract Labor			
On-the-job Training			
Disability Awareness Training			
Identify Essential Job Functions			
Reasonable Accommodation			
Affirmative Action Planning			
Injured or Disabled Worker Assistance			
Information on Americans with Disabilities Act			
Other			

Thank you for your time in completing this survey for us. We welcome any additional comments you might wish to make. _____

_____

_____

_____

Please return this form to:

Division of Rehabilitation Services
Program Evaluation Unit
P. O. Box 11586
Montgomery, AL 36111-0586
Attention: Ronny McCall

Appendix E
DRS Employer Services

Developing Relationships

Explained rehabilitation or employer services
Other

Placement Related Activities/Services

Identified job vacancies
Referred to job lead
Placed client in a job
Followed up on referral or placement
Provided post-placement assistance
Assisted in TJTC

Develop and Implement Special Training/Employment Projects

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
BEP Site
Contract Labor
On-the-job Evaluation
NISH Site
Projects With Industry (PWI)
Supported Employment
On-the-job Training
Unpaid Work Experience
Work Station
Other special projects

Other Consultant Services

Plan/provide awareness training
Set-up/provide job coaching (not supported employment)
ADA Services or Training
Job Analysis
Assist with affirmative action planning
Participate in job accommodation
Conduct accessibility review
Set-up/participate in plan tour
Other consultant service provided

Alabama Division of Rehabilitation Services
List of Services to/Activities with Employers
July, 1993

Appendix F
IRI Study Groups

Prime Study Group

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Additional Copies

The Name of the Game: Employment

Order No. 07-1699

MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT AND
DISSEMINATION CENTER

A Component of the
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